

Richard Waterman House
219 Benefit Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-153

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
9-

PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI 153

RICHARD WATERMAN HOUSE

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Address: 219 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.

Lot 428, Flat 12. 113 Benefit Street
in 1844, 143 Benefit Street in 1847, 211 Benefit
Street in 1866.

Present Owner University Club
and Occupant:

Present Use: Restaurant

Brief Statement This is a large, brick house, built in the 1820's,
of Significance: and extensively remodeled in the mid-19th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Original and subsequent owners:

1826 Nathan Waterman sells to Rufus Waterman, merchant,
1 certain lot of land on the E/ly side of Benefit Street
beginning at a point 58' from the N/Wly corner of Earle
D Pearce's lot on said Benefit Street thence N/ly at right
angles on the grantor's land 110', thence S/ly parallel
with said Benefit Street 42', thence W/ly, bounding S/ly
on a strip of land contemplated to be thrown out for a
gangway of 16' width between granted lot and grantor's other
land 110' to place of beginning, it being expressly under-
stood and agreed that the strip of land or gangway is to
remain open as a passageway at all times for the mutual
benefit of the grantor and grantee. - Deed Book 52, page
42 in Providence City Hall.

1830 WILL Rufus Waterman: "I also give and bequeath
to my son Richard Waterman the free use and improvement of
the lot of land situated on Benefit Street which was con-
veyed to me by my brother Nathan Waterman by two deeds
(Deed Book 52, page 42 and Deed Book 52, page 279) together
with the NEW BRICK HOUSE thereon and all the privileges
during the term of 10 years after my decease and I value
the same at \$10,000. At the expiration of 10 years, he may
exchange it for my estate in Olneyville valued at \$9000 or
if he wishes neither I hereby authorize my executor (son
Richard) to sell and dispose of said Estates or such one
as he may elect not to take, at Public Auction." - Wills
Book 13, page 478 in Providence City Hall.

1855 WILL Richard Waterman: "...I also give and devise to my said daughter, Emily, the use, occupation and improvement of the house, land and buildings comprising the Homestead Estate where I now reside...and name my nephew Rufus Waterman, trustee."- Wills Book 18, page 96 in Providence City Hall.

1885 WILL Emily Waterman: Devises all her Estate to her cousin Rufus Waterman. - Wills Book 30, page 324 in Providence City Hall.

1893 INDENTURE Rufus Waterman grants to William H Wood, in trust, the following parcels of land..."SIXTH: That parcel of land with the DWELLING HOUSE, Barn and other improvements thereon known as the Waterman Estate, running back from Benefit St E/ly to Waterman Street, bounding S/ly on said Bartlett lot and N/ly on the next parcel herein described. SEVENTH: That lot at the junction of Benefit and Waterman Streets in said City of Providence adjoining said Waterman Estate and know as the Monument Lot containing about 4000 sq. ft." - Deed Book 373, page 420 in Providence City Hall.

1895 Wm H Wood, trustee u/w of Rufus Waterman sells to the R I Investment Company two parcels of land on the E/ly side of Benefit Street joining each other. - Deed Book 393, page 418 in Providence City Hall (Subject to George H Burnham)

1897 George H Burnham, commissioner, sells to the R. I. Investment Company for \$1650 at public auction, they being the highest bidder, that lot of land bounded W/ly on Benefit Street and W/ly, N/Ely, and E/ly upon and curving with Waterman Street and S/ly by and angling with that other land of said R. I. Investment Company formerly known as the Waterman Homestead Estate, being the lot of land heretofor known as the Waterman Burial Lot of the Waterman Monument lot. - Deed Book 413, page 499 in Providence City Hall.

1908 R I Investment Company sells to the University Club that lot of land with all buildings and improvements, being the same conveyed to the said R. I. Investment Company by William H Wood in 1895 and by George H Burnham, commissioner in 1897.

From Providence Directory

1828 to 1856	Richard Waterman, Paper manufacturer
1844 to 1847	Sarah Thompson (nee Waterman)
1858 to 1885	Emily Waterman, daughter of Richard... Taught at Meeting St. School
1889 to 1892	Rev. Charles Babcock, rector of Grace Church
1894.....	Rufus Waterman
1900.....	University Club

- B. Date of Erection: 1826-30
- C. Notes on alterations and additions: Of the original 1820's house, only the entrance porch with a double flight of stairs would seem to be unaltered. The house shows clearly in a photograph of Providence taken in 1844, reproduced as the frontispiece in Antoinette F. Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1937). In this view, the facade is divided in five bays instead of the present three bays, and the house is only two stories high with a balustraded hip roof and a high monitor. The facade, in its over-all organization as well as its detail, is similar to the houses built on College Hill in the 1850's and 1860's. The interior has been remodeled at several different times. A large, modern, dining room wing, one story high, has been added to the north side, and other wings on the south and east (rear) sides.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large, brick house, built in the 1820's and extensively remodeled later. It preserves an elegant porch from the 1820's and its facade was remodeled to conform to the style of the 1850's and 1860's.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: Main block about 45' square, three stories high, elevated basement on the front, three-bay facade on the west, later wings added on the sides and the rear.
2. Foundations: Regular coursed ashlar on the front, field-stone on the sides and rear.
3. Wall construction: Brick, laid in running bond, painted red.
4. Porches, stoops: Entrance porch probably the only original feature remaining. Porch at main floor level, approached by two opposed flights of granite steps along the front

of the house, 13 steps high, with simple iron railings. One-story porch with slender, paired Ionic columns at the front corners, flat pilasters at the wall, Ionic entablature with balustrade.

5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys in the main block in the outside, end walls.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original doorway in place with crosssetted, molded architraves. The basement doorway under the entrance porch is a typical College Hill feature. Front door replaced.
 - b. Windows: Double-hung windows, six-light sash, stone sills and lintels; third-story windows have segmental arched heads, window cornices are a typical mid-19th century detail.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Hip roof, asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice: Modillion cornice, large scale details.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central-hall plan, originally with four rooms per floor apparently. First floor now has double parlors on the south side of the central hall, rooms on the north side now joined with later dining room wing, kitchens in the rear.
2. Stairways: Main stairway in central hall typical of the 1860's, U-shape, two runs with landing, heavy turned balusters, ramped molded rail, newel post, in the form of a Doric colonette, step ends decorated with applied scroll decorations, stairway continues to third floor, plain stairway soffits.
3. Flooring: Later parquet floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plain plastered walls and ceilings, some simple chair rails.
5. Doorways and doors: Paneled doors, molded mitered architraves on doorways. Some doorways in the rear part of the house have later, segmental arched tops.
6. Hardware: Some silver plated hardware.

7. Lighting: Electric
8. Heating: Central. Original one-story wood mantel in the southeast room on first floor.

D. Site

1. Orientation and general setting: The house is situated at the southeast corner of Benefit and Waterman Streets, facing west, on the sidewalk line at the front, on a sloping lot with the basement at ground level on the west.
2. Walks: Brick or concrete sidewalks.
3. Landscaping: Informal planting area around wing on north side of main block.

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